

70 Million Cubic Meters of Treated Wastewater Has Been So Far Transferred to Lake Urmia, Aiming at Ultimately Reaching 105 Million Cubic Meters

IRAN NEWS

Head of Tehran Emergency Department Peyman Saberian Said That If There Is a Wave of COVID-19 Infection on the Way, Healthcare Services Will Be Available as the Equipment Is Available

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DOMESTIC

Leader Thanks Good Performance of IRGC



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DOMESTIC

Coronavirus Has No Affected Iran-Russia Trade

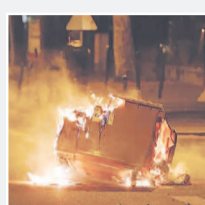


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UEFA Urges Leagues to Complete Suspended Football Seasons



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Trump's Support for Rallies Against Lockdown Shows U.S. in Disarray

TEHRAN (PressTV) – President Hassan Rouhani says the recent expression of support by his U.S. counterpart for street protests against virus-related restrictions introduced by legal state governors shows America is “complete shambles,” noting that the chaotic situation there should serve as a “salutary lesson” for Iran.

“You witness today that in the U.S., the president invites people to anarchy,” President Hassan Rouhani told a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday.

The Iranian president said it was “rare in history” for a chief executive to resort to such attitude, and adopt a “heinous” stance against his country’s legal governors.

Protests have erupted across many U.S. states against the restrictions put in place by governors to help stop further spread of the new coronavirus. The novel virus that can cause a potentially fatal infection has taken its biggest toll in the world on the United States by killing more than 45,340 Americans.

Rouhani said, “It is essentially obvious that this country (the U.S.) is in complete shambles. They do not know how to address [the issues of] medical treatment and unemployment.”

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COVID-19 Kills 94 More in Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran's Health Ministry's Public Relations Office Kianoush Jahanpour said on Wednesday that 63,113 people out of a total of 85,996 infected with the coronavirus have survived while 5,391 have unfortunately succumbed to death.

Jahanpour said that 1,194 new affected cases have been detected since yesterday.

Over the last 24 hours, 94 people died due to the deadly virus, he added.

The Iranian official noted that 3,311 cases are in critical condition.

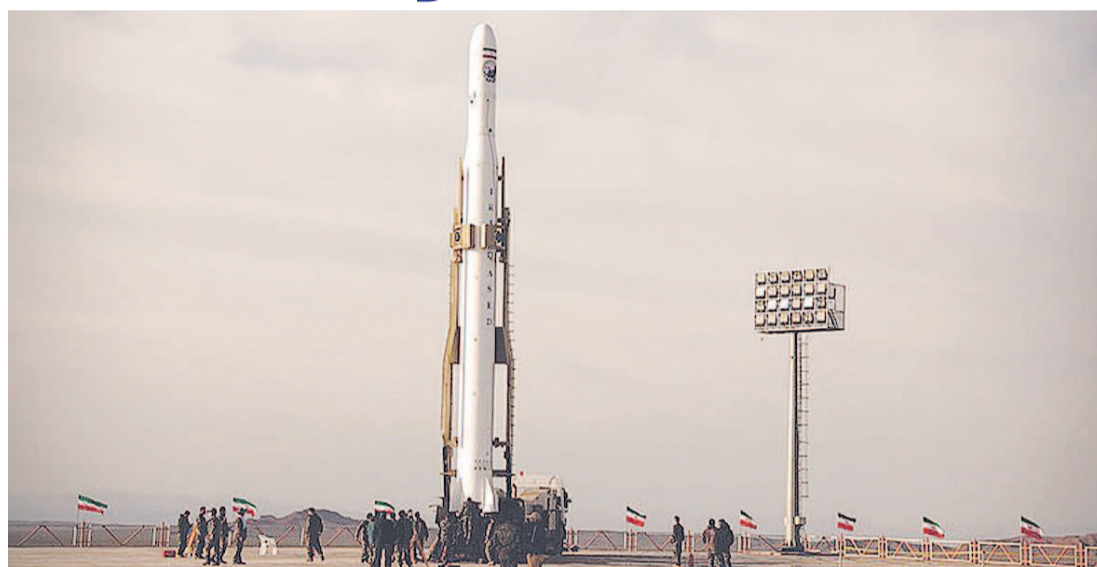
He went on to say that 377,396 tests have so far been carried out in Iran.

Iran has taken numerous steps to stop the spread of the disease, from shutting down schools and universities to canceling cultural and religious gatherings. It is also constantly disinfecting and sanitizing public places.

Meanwhile Deputy Interior Minister for Security Affairs Hossein Zolfagari said that shrinking in the COVID-19 disease does not mean it has gone or disappear so far, any negligence might trigger it to be another epidemic.

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IRGC Successfully Shoots Iran First Military Satellite Into Orbit



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has successfully launched and placed the country's first military satellite into the orbit.

The elite force fired the satellite — dubbed Nour (Light)-1 — aboard Qased (Carrier) satellite carrier during an operation that was staged in Dasht-e Kavir, Iran's sprawling central desert, on Wednesday, the Corps' Sepah News reported.

The satellite was placed into the orbit 425 kilometers above Earth's surface.

The Tasnim News Agency, meanwhile, carried a report outlining some details of the launch and the country's space activities. The report described Nour-1 as Iran's first multi-purpose satellite with application in the defense industry among other areas.

The launch operation, it noted, was carried out by the IRGC's Aerospace Division from a launch station situated in the desert plain's Shahroud region.

The report specified Qased as the country's first three-stage satellite launcher to successfully pass all its tests. The agency said the country's aerospace program was expected to gather pace following the launch.

Over the next several years, it said, the country was expected to deploy its military space activities towards taking care of its relevant telecommunication purposes, including promotion of reconnaissance and safe communication capabilities.

Speaking on the launch, IRGC Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami said, “Today, we can observe the world from space,” congratulating Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and the Iranian people on the Islamic establishment's achievement.

The launch, he said, served as an acknowledgment of the “empowerment approach” that has been advised by the Leader. General Salami noted that the development showed that the Islamic Republic was capable of securing “remarkable” achievements that warranted international acclaim in whatever area that the country would choose to explore.

“The satellite's successful launch enhanced new aspects of the Islamic Republic's defensive might. By God's grace, the Corps turned into a space force today,” the commander said.

General Salami further characterized the achievement as a strategic gain that expanded “the realm of our capabilities.” Setting foot in the space was a “necessity” for a powerful defense force like the IRGC, he added.

The success translates into a “mutation” in expansion of the country's intelligence reach and command, General Salami said, noting that the orbiter could now come to the country's assistance in “intelligence warfare.”

Salami hailed that all the components of both the satellite and the carrier had been produced indigenously and despite the US's sanctions.

The launch conveys the message that not only have not the sanctions proven an obstacle in the way of Iran's progress, but have also “turned on the engine propelling the novel technologies that turn us into a great power in the region and on the international stage in the foreseeable future,” the commander said.

China Slams Australia for Copying U.S., Blaming Beijing for Pandemic

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has censured Australia for copying the United States and attempting to frame Beijing as the party responsible for the coronavirus pandemic.

China's Embassy in Canberra said Australian officials were “parroting” U.S. President Donald Trump and other high-level American officials blaming China for the pandemic.

“It is well known that recently some people in the US including high-level officials have been spreading anti-China ‘information virus,’” a statement from the Chinese embassy said late on Tuesday. “These days, certain Australian politicians are keen to parrot what those Americans have asserted and simply follow them in staging political attacks on China.”

On Wednesday, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that, in a phone call with Trump, he had sought US support for launching an international investigation into the coronavirus pandemic.

Morrison accused China of failing to alert the world to the risks of the coronavirus in a timely and transparent fashion, resulting in economic damage to Australia.

Morrison's office said he had also spoken about the issue on the phone with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron.

The new coronavirus, which has afflicted some 2.56 million people around the world and killed nearly 177,500 others, first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December last year. The U.S. administration has recently been insinuating that the virus was artificially synthesized in a laboratory in Wuhan. The lab facing the accusation has dismissed the claim as a conspiracy theory.

The director of a virology institute in China's Wuhan denies U.S. allegations that the new coronavirus originated from a laboratory in China.

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Tehran Ready to Share Experience in Coronavirus Battle With Muscat

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Hassan Rouhani has expressed the country's readiness to share its experiences in the fight against the novel coronavirus with the Sultanate of Oman.

In a telephone conversation with Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al Said on Wednesday, President Rouhani pointed to the tough conditions in the region and the world due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, and stressed the need for collective action by all countries in the fight against the disease.

The president also voiced Iran's readiness to provide the friendly and neighboring state, Oman, with the experiences and achievements in the battle with COVID-19 and to offer whatever assistance necessary.

Paying tribute to the late sultan of Oman Qaboos bin Said, the Iranian president wished the new sultan success and expressed hope for closer ties between Tehran and Muscat during Sultan Haitham's tenure.

Highlighting a rise in the volume of trade exchanges between Iran and Oman over the past recent months, President Rouhani emphasized the necessity for the expansion of relations in all fields.

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Germany “Positive” About IMF's Loan to Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that Berlin is not against IMF's \$5 billion emergency loan to Iran amid the pandemic.

Iran has asked the International Monetary Fund for a \$5 billion in emergency funding to contain the outbreak and mitigate its consequences. The international body has not yet answered to Iran's request, saying that they are still “assessing” the demand. Meanwhile, the United States is reportedly against the loan, claiming that Tehran may use the fund in other areas than the pandemic.

“In fact, the German government is positive about the possibility of providing the IMF loan to Iran to fight coronavirus and its consequences,” Maas said on Tuesday, but as he continued, he implied that Germany is also following US accusations and may hamper the loan.

“But the final vote of the German government depends on a format of the loan the IMF and Iran will agree on,” he added according to Sputnik.

“If the purpose of the loan is to fight COVID-19, which has seriously affected Iran, then we, along with France and the UK, believe that the IMF should, in an appropriate way, ensure that the aid will be directed at overcoming this crisis,” he added.

U.S. accusations against Iran come as the Trump administration has rejected the international community's call to ease sanctions which hamper the country's efforts to fight the outbreak.

Riyadh Withholding Bodies of 90 Activists In Violation of Rights Law

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia is reportedly withholding the bodies of at least 90 activists, among them critics of the construction of a controversial megacity project on the kingdom's Red Sea coast.

The Arabic-language Mirat al-Jazeera news website reported on Tuesday that the Riyadh regime refuses to hand over the bodies of the Saudi activists to their families.

The report did not give details on whether the activists had been killed by regime forces during protests or executed.

Among those whose bodies are being withheld is Abdul-Rahim al-Howeiti, who was shot dead by Saudi forces in the al-Khuraybah area of the northwestern Tabuk region earlier this month.

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14,000 Iranians Return Home On Near-Empty Flights

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's deputy transport minister said on Wednesday that 14,000 Iranian citizens returned home from different countries in the coronavirus outbreak on flights that were empty on departure.

Shahram Adamnejad said that the first step was to prepare protocols for all transportation sections. 11 protocols were issued to help curb the outbreak. Ministry of Transportation was among the firsts to follow them.

Adamnejad said the capacity of transportation was limited and in some parts, the demand dropped by about 85 percent, which was a good thing for public health and a bad thing for transportation economy.

Rouhani Urges EU to Stand Against U.S. Veto Of Iran's IMF Request

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani in a message referred to his agreement with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin that the EU must stand against U.S.' veto of Iran's loan request from IMF.

"In phone call today w/ Pres Putin, we agreed on the importance of int'l cooperation to fight #COVID19," Rouhani wrote on his Twitter account.

"Also agreed that the EU must take action against U.S. unlawful behaviors, incl its veto of Iran's loan request from the IMF to fight pandemic," he added.

"Tehran-Moscow will implement agreements," he noted.

Iranian and Russian presidents in a phone talks late on Tuesday described bilateral ties as cordial and strategic, stressing the need for efforts to help improve all-out ties and accelerate implementation of agreements already signed between Tehran and Moscow.

Rouhani in a telephone call with Qatari emir late on Tuesday hailed brotherly and friendly relations between the two countries while saying that ensuring security and lasting stability in the regions has no way but collaboration and friendship among regional states.

President Rouhani also described promoting cooperation and consensus among all the countries in fighting coronavirus as important and influential.

Referring to the planning and measures taken in Iran in the face of coronavirus and necessary policymaking for carrying out economic, administrative and educational activities, the Iranian chief executive said, "We are ready for sharing experiences with all countries, especially Qatar as the brotherly and friendly country."



"We must work to ensure that trade and economic relations between the two countries would continue in full compliance with the health protocols," President Rouhani said while urging the two countries' officials in the Joint Cooperation Commission to make efforts in this respect.

The U.S. sanctions and pressure policies against Iran are not only in violation of international regulations, but also they breach human principles, as they intensify sanctions under the difficult situation and prevent the International Monetary Fund (IMF) from lending to Iran.

"We believe that under the situation all countries should work together against coronavirus pandemic and announce their stances clearly against the U.S. antagonistic moves," he said.

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, for his part, wished good health for the Iranian nation and government as well as all the Muslims across the world, saying, "We should prevent spread of the disease in cooperation with each other."

Stressing the need for boosting trade and economic relations between Iran and Qatar, he called for their officials' efforts in this respect.

Describing the U.S. sanctions against Iran as cruel, he said that today, the world is in a special situation and the U.S. should lift sanctions under these circumstances.

Tehran Mayor Discusses Coronavirus With Muscat, Istanbul Counterparts

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi in an online video conference with Muscat and Istanbul counterparts reiterated that the only way for countering coronavirus pandemic is international consensus.

"No vaccine has indeed been developed for #Corona yet, but I'm sure that there's only one way to deal with global crises: international interaction," Hanachi wrote on his Twitter account.

"I talked to Hamdoon Al Harthi and @imamoglu_int today, distinguished mayors of Muscat and Istanbul.



We'll be always together," he added.

The head of Iran's Health Ministry's Public Relations Office said earlier on Tuesday that a total of 84,802 have been infected with COVID-19 in Iran, from whom 5,297 have lost their lives to the virus.

Kianoush Jahanpour said that 1,297 new affected cases have been detected since yesterday (Monday).

Over the last 24 hours, 88 people died due to the deadly virus, he said.

Larijani Congratulates Turkish Parliament's Centenary

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani in a message to his Turkish counterpart Mustafa Sentop on Tuesday congratulated 100th founding anniversary of the establishment of Turkey's parliament and called for further strengthening of ties in line with ensuring both peoples' interests.

"I would like to express my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to Your Excellency, esteemed members of parliament, government and the great nation of your country," Larijani's message read. Stressing the need for consolidating friendly relations, he assured that parliamentary cooperation in various fields will open a bright horizon for relations between the two countries.

Larijani also voiced Iranian parliament's readiness for further enhancement of mutual cooperation. "I would like to take this opportunity to pray to God to bestow on your Excellency and esteemed members of the National Assembly good health and increasing success as well as well-being and prosperity for the people of the friendly and neighborly country of Turkey," he said.

Tehran Ready for Unlimited Expansion of Ties With Kampala

TEHRAN (IFP0 - President of Iran Hassan Rouhani has voiced the country's readiness to promote relations with Uganda in all arenas without any limitation.

In a Tuesday telephone conversation with his Ugandan counterpart Yoweri Museveni, President Rouhani hailed the perfect relations between Tehran and Kampala on the basis of mutual respect, saying, "We are prepared to enhance the bilateral ties in all fields without any limitation, and to employ the whole capacities and capabilities of the two countries in line with the friendly relations."

Pointing to the difficult conditions that the outbreak of coronavirus has created for the nations, President Rouhani stressed that all countries should join hands in the battle with the disease. "The special global situation should affect the interaction between the countries, so that certain states could not continue with their illegal measures," he added.

India, China to Send Two Anti-Corona Drugs to Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - Chief Executive of Medical Procurement Organization Hassan Safarieh said that India and People's Republic of China will send two anti-coronavirus aid packages to the Islamic Republic of Iran by the end of this week.

He made the remarks and said, "these aid packages include 1,000 Ribavirin medicines and 500 ACTEMRA ampules which will arrive in the country by the end of current week."

The mentioned consignments have been purchased from India and China, he said, adding, "earlier, one humanitarian medical aid had been imported into the country from China." Recently, a pharmaceutical consignment, TAMIFLU capsule, has recently been imported into the country and was distributed among people, he continued.

Turning to the production of disinfectants in the country, he said, "domestic companies are producing disinfectants with their utmost power in a way that 5,000 to 10,000 liters of solution are produced daily in the country." CEO of Medical Procurement Organization of Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) added, "with the coordination made, 500,000 sanitary and hygienic packages will be distributed by the Red Crescent Society's Volunteers Organization among the needy families in coming days."

Leader Thanks Good Performance of IRGC



TEHRAN (MNA) - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei issued a message on Wednesday, appreciating the efforts of IRGC.

The message was delivered by Brigadier General Mohammad Shirazi, the head of the military office of the Leader, in a phone conversation with IRGC Chief Commander Major General Salami.

"Send my greetings to all IRGC personnel and their families on the occasion of the force's formation anniversary," Leader said. "I appreciate good performance and IRGC's efforts and I pray for them."

The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps was founded on April 22, 1979, by the order of Ayatollah Khomeini, founding father of the Islamic Revolution.

In addition to its role in ensuring the country's security, IRGC is also seen these days as an active player in the nationwide fight against the novel coronavirus outbreak. The force has started missions to disinfect public places, establish field hospitals, and offer foodstuff packages to the underprivileged who have been affected by the disease.

Iran Takes Delivery of COVID19 Test Kits Bought From France

ORUMIYEH (IRNA) - Iran took delivery of some six tons consignment of coronavirus test kits bought from France through Sari Su border market, the managing director of Bazargan Customs Office said.

Sadeq Namdar said this is the third pharmaceutical consignment which arrived in Iran with the agreement of Iranian and Turkish border chiefs and through Sari Su border market in Maku.

He added that the shipment was transported in a truck including 38 pallets weighing about six tons and worth €443,685.

He noted that Bazargan Customs Office is ready to transport all pharmaceutical consignments through Sari Su border market to Iran.

The first pharmaceutical consignment which was purchased from Germany weighing 26 tons arrived in Iran through this border market 20 days ago, Namdar said.

Most Western States Not in Favor of Enhanced Iran-Russia Ties

MOSCOW (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador in Russia Kazem Jalali said on Tuesday that most of the western countries are not willing to see development of Tehran-Moscow relations, as most of them do mischievous acts and release false news.

Jalali expounded on mutual cooperation to counter sanctions as well as the challenges facing the two countries' ties.

Jalali who has been appointed as Iran's ambassador in Moscow several months ago, said that Iran-Russia ties boast of a historical background which has been preserved in the minds of the Iranian people.

However, there is no correct understanding about Russia in the post-Soviet era under Vladimir Putin among the Iranians, he said.

In fact, the two peoples have not traveled much to each other's countries and do not know each other well, Jalali said, noting that this lack of mutual acquaintance naturally damages bilateral relations. The people of Iran and Russia need to know each other better.

Unfortunately, Iran is the 50th trade partner of Russia and this is not satisfactory, Jalali complained, noting that volume of trade between the two countries is very low.

"In the tourism sector, we have not expanded our relations much," he said, noting that this is while some 40,000 Iranian students are currently studying in Russia.

Commenting on the two countries' cooperation in fighting coronavirus, he said that they have had close ties ever since the virus hit the countries.

Russians voiced readiness for cooperation with Iran in the field of health protocols and several Russian firms were prepared to sell medicine to Iran, Jalali said.

As to Tehran-Moscow international collaboration, he said that Russians were very active in removing sanctions, as President Vladimir Putin dealt with the issue personally and stressed the need for creating a green corridor among the countries.

IRGC Thwarts Conspiracies of U.S., Allies Against Iran for 41 Years

TEHRAN (IP) - First Vice-Speaker of Iran's Parliament Masoud Pezeshkian said that the existence of IRGC caused all the conspiracies of the United States and its allies against Iran to fail for 41 years.

Pezeshkian, who chaired Wednesday open session, on the occasion of the anniversary of the establishment of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) said that the existence of the IRGC is like a stronghold that can protect people against the enemy and causes the pride and dignity of religion.

He added, "The IRGC makes us proud and without them, we would never have been able to see security; the existence of the IRGC caused all the conspiracies of the United States and its allies against the Islamic Republic of Iran to fail for 41 years."

Pezeshkian further noted, "We congratulate this day. They have always been present in all scenes, not only on the fronts, but also in the mountains, in earthquakes, floods, diseases, and construction. May God honor our soldiers and guards."

Enemies Backing Terrorists to Undermine Security of Iran's Borders

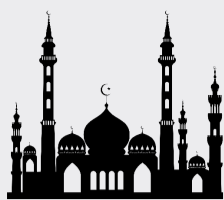
TEHRAN (FNA) - Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said that Iran's enemies seek to undermine the security of the borders by empowering the terrorist outfits, adding that the country's border guards have thwarted the plots so far.

Rahmani Fazli made the remarks addressing the 24th National Conference of Commanders, Deputies, Heads, and Managers of Police Force held via video conferencing.

The Iranian interior minister pointed to the outbreak of coronavirus in the country and the Police's measures in this regard, and said, "This disease is unknown. In the early days, we faced a shortage of hygienic equipment, but two months after the disease, we can now produce 4 million industrial masks a day, and we have no problem with hygienic equipment."

He, meantime, said that controlling the entry to and exit from cities and closing jobs were among the good measures that were implemented to deal with the coronavirus.

The Iranian health ministry announced on Tuesday that the country has identified 1,297 new cases of coronavirus infection, adding that over nearly 61,000 patients have recovered so far.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:02
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:03
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:48
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:19

76. Let not their speech, then, grieve thee.
Verily We know what they hide as well as what they disclose.
77. Doth not man see that it is We Who created him from sperm?
yet behold! he (stands forth) as an open adversary!
Surah 36. Ya-sin (76 - 77)

Coronavirus Has No Affected Iran-Russia Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-Russia joint chamber of commerce Hadi Tizhoush Taban says recent outbreak of Coronavirus has not affected Iran-Russia trade because all routes for trade with Russia are open.

Speaking to ILNA, Tizhoush Taban said that the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Agreement has been definitely to the benefit of Russian economic activists because they enjoy better conditions and advantages comparing to their Iranian counterparts.

On the latest condition of Iran-Russia trade, he said currently Iran is doing its trade with Russia via land, rail and marine and while Coronavirus has closed several borders, fortunately Iran's trade with Russia has continued and consequently the virus has not affected the bilateral trade.

He noted since Iranians are more exporters to Russia, they should know fully the rules and regulations in Russia in order to continue exports seriously.

He warned that if Iranian exporters are not fully aware with regulations in Russia, they would definitely suffer losses and Iranian officials can cooperate with their Russian counterparts in this regard. Tizhoush Taban added that fortunately, Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian as the head of Iran-Russia Joint Economic Cooperation Commission is the strong point for trade between both states who has helped significantly in this regard.



On the Russia's ban on exporting cereals and its impact on Iran's economy, he said so far Russians have announced nothing, but Iran's imports of cereals from Russia are only limited to barley and corn, and also to the limited amount of wheat which are imported via Amirabad Port and Anzali Port.

He reiterated that one should take this point into consideration that currently all countries are facing with certain food conditions but all should wait and see Russians' final decision.

On the impacts of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Agreement on Iran-Russia trade, Tizhoush Taban said the agreement is definitely to the benefit of Russians because they enjoy better conditions and advantages rather than Iranians, adding that talks should continue in order to change the condition to a win-win one for both sides.

Mohammadi Appointed as New Chairman of MBRI

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Former head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization Shapour Mohammadi was appointed as the new chairman of Monetary and Banking Research Institute (MBRI).



According to reports, the governor of Central Bank of Iran Abdolnaser Hemmati in a decree appointed Mohammadi as the new chairman of the MBRI.

Mohammadi replaced Ali Divandar. Shapouri resigned as the head of the SEO last week and was replaced by Hassan Qalibaf Asl.

He was one of the successful managers of the SEO in recent years.

EDBI Prioritizes Facilities for Knowledge-Based Companies Involved in Coronavirus

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Exports and Investment Directorate of Export Development Bank of Iran Syed Hossein Hosseinian says last year the bank granted over 1850b rials of loan facilities to the knowledge-based companies and this year those knowledge-based companies which are active in containing Coronavirus are prioritized for the loan facilities.



He said the loan facilities were granted to the knowledge-based companies based on the preferential rate, adding that the current condition in the country has doubled the importance of attention to the knowledge-based companies and EDBI according to its authorities can have more effective aids to those companies.

Hosseinian said that the knowledge-based companies can use the guarantees of the Research and Technologies Funds as bank guarantee for their loan facilities.

He added that due to the outbreak of Coronavirus and emphasis on production units in the field of disinfectants, text kits and related fields, the knowledge-based companies which are active in those fields are priorities for the loan facilities this year.

Hosseinian reiterated that the bank has taken some measures to accelerate granting loan facilities. He noted that according to the new directives of the bank, since the beginning of the week, the bank was ready to accept applications for the facilities in all its branches in the country.

BMI Offers 18% Interest Rate for Deposit Certificate

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Bank Melli Iran (BMI) started a new service for deposit certificate with 18 percent interest rate as of yesterday.

The public relations of the bank announced that the bank as of Wednesday started paying 18 percent interest rate to the one-year deposit certificates in the bank which is transferable to other persons.

The 18-percent interest for the BMI's deposit certificate is a golden opportunity for those people who are after a safe way for investment.

The interest will be part payment monthly and it is tax-free and it can be sold to the bank before its maturity date with 10 percent interest rate.

It is worthy to note that the deposit certificate will be issued electronically and no deposit tag will be given to the customers. So protection of the issued receipt for the certificate will be necessary.



Air Travel Affected Significantly By Coronavirus



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of Iran's Aviation Companies Association Maghsoud Asadi Samani says Iran's airliners have suffered huge losses as the Coronavirus has affected significantly the air travel industry and even lifting some restrictions for travels has had no major impact for the bounce-back of the industry.

Speaking to ILNA, Asadi Samani said currently only 20 percent of the national air fleet is active, namely, only 20 percent of total 40 planes in the national air fleet are active but their flights are not fully booked and most of the flights are carried out with half of its passenger capacities.

He added despite the government's decision to reopen some businesses and to lift restrictions for commuting, the demand for air travel has not seen any major rise.

He admitted that most of flights are done with almost having 60 percent passengers. He said restrictions of flights to Kish and Qeshm islands are still valid and nothing has changed.

On international flights, he said Iranian airlines still continue their flights to Paris and London and other international flights are done upon the requests of Iranian passengers.

Asadi Samani added that Iranian nationals abroad can apply for flight by going to Iran's embassies and the embassies in coordination with Iranian airlines would arrange some special flights for Iranians to come back home.

On dismissal of staff by the airlines because of current condition, he said fortunately Iranian airliners have avoided dismissing their staff because they are well aware that human resources are the best assets for the companies. He reiterated but all depends on the government's aid to the airliners and the airlines are waiting for the government's supportive packages.

He noted that the airlines have not yet received any supportive package from the government and the government should act very soon.

Iran Shipped \$60b Worth of Goods, Services Since Start of U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has pocketed around \$60 billion from exports of products, services and energy since the United States imposed its sanctions on the country's sale of crude two years ago.

A senior official at the ministry of trade (MINT) said on Tuesday that Iran had shipped a total of 135 million metric tons of non-crude goods and products to other countries between March 2018 and March 2020.

Hossein Modarres said that declared revenues for those shipments reached around \$41.3 billion although he insisted that real income derived from exports over the past two calendar years was around \$48 billion as many exporters normally declare lower values for their cargoes.

Modarres said that Iranian government and the private sector had gained another \$12 billion from the provision of technical, engineering and tourism services to other countries as well as from the exports of natural gas.

Iran says sponge iron exports surged by 86% y/y in February despite a 10% tariff imposed on shipments.

He said moving away from oil incomes turned out to be a blessing for Iran as the country is now feeling the minimum possible pressure from a historic crash in international crude prices.

"If there was no national self-esteem for moving away from oil there could be economic shocks because of the freefall in the price of oil in the international markets," he said, adding, "Iran has been spared of these shocks (through) relying on export revenues."

For the past two years, Iran has adopted various measures to help boost exports of various goods and services including lowering tariffs and taking steps to shore up key sectors of the economy like agriculture and manufacturing.

Petrochemical products still account for a bulk of Iran's exports to other countries followed by metals and raw minerals, agri-food and handicraft.

OPEC Unable to Handle Current Situation Solely

TEHRAN (MNA) - Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries cannot solely handle the current market issues, urging other producers' commitment in this regard.

"The coronavirus outbreak has caused fuel demand to drop drastically, which has also led to the slump of prices this year," Zanganeh said on Wednesday on the sidelines of the weekly cabinet meeting.

He noted that based on the previous estimations, OPEC had put the oil demand for this year's second quarter at 14 million barrels per day, however, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the market demand now revolves around three million bpd.

Reiterating that OPEC will not be able to handle the

situation alone, Zanganeh urged other producers, including the Shale oil producers, to shoulder their responsibilities toward the global challenge to help pass through the crisis.

He referred to the historic plunge of WTI and OPEC basket prices, and also the producers' running out of storage capacity, stressing that should the OPEC and non-OPEC players in the market not cooperate, the situation will definitely worsen.

Oil prices slumped again on Wednesday, with Brent falling to the lowest since 1999, as the market struggled with a massive crude glut amid a collapse in demand for everything from gasoline to jet fuel caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

Home Appliance Industry Can Expand \$300m

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Top advisor in Iran's Association of Household Appliance Industry said on Wednesday that the industry saved \$250 million in the last year and a half by enlarging domestic manufacturing and that the amount can increase to \$300 million this year.

Abbas Hashemi said that the deepening of domestic manufacturing was a strategy followed up by the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade and also the industrial associations and NGOs.

Iran's parts manufacturing industry has a high capacity in producing parts for electromotors, fans, evaporators, condensers and compressors and annually exports \$230 million to \$240 million of products, according to Hashemi.

He also said that everything, including human resources, policies and all raw materials, is ready and a good management is required to improve the industry.

Iran Trade Events, Fairs Not to Be Canceled This Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) Hamid Zadboum said that no trade events and exhibitions will be canceled in the current Iranian calendar year [started March 21, 2020] due to the outbreak of coronavirus, COVID-19, in the country.

As a foreign trade policy-setting body, Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) is ready to hold trade and business events in 'online' basis, he said, adding, "accordingly, no trade fairs and events will be abolished this year and those who are active in the economic sector should not worry about this."

According to the annual trend and after the Holy Month of Ramadan, all exhibition TPOI chief highlighted.



titles will be held in cooperation with the relevant associations, the deputy minister of industry stressed.

Holding trade fairs and exhibitions in 'online' basis will create a new opportunity for Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) which previously failed to participate in the events due to the limited space, he continued.

Physical holding of the trade exhibitions will begin seriously shortly after the removal of limitations caused by the coronavirus pandemic in the country,

U.S. Failed to Block UN Virus Vaccine Resolution

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The UN General Assembly has demanded equal access for any future COVID-19 vaccine but its seeming unanimity was a fluke. The United States in fact opposed the resolution but acted too late to stop it, diplomats say.

The 193 members of the General Assembly adopted by consensus Monday a resolution led by Mexico that calls for “equitable, efficient and timely” access to any vaccine developed to fight the pandemic. But the non-binding resolution irked the United States for another reason. It highlighted the “crucial leading role” of the World Health Organization, which President Donald Trump has strongly criticized for not doing more to halt the virus after it was detected in China.



UAE Reportedly Shipped Tons Of Jet Fuel to Haftar Militias

ANKARA (Dispatches) - United Arab Emirates-based companies shipped tons of jet fuel to eastern Libya, the stronghold of warlord Khalifa Haftar, in a suspected violation of international arms embargo, according to an investigation by Financial Times.

The companies sent in March nearly 11,000 tons of jet fuel to the city of Benghazi, which is under the control of Haftar militias, the newspaper said, adding that the shipment had a market value of nearly \$5 million at the time it was loaded from the UAE. The supplier of the fuel, according to the publication, was Afrifin Logistics FZE, which is based in Sharjah. It was loaded on to MT Gulf Petroleum 4, a Liberian-flagged tanker operated by Gulf Shipping Services FZC.



Violence Flares in Tense Paris Suburbs



PARIS (Dispatches) - Three nights of unrest in the French capital's northern suburbs have stoked fears of a major flare-up in deprived neighborhoods where weeks of lockdown have exacerbated the simmering tensions between restless youths and police.

Six weeks into France's nationwide lockdown, Zouhair Ech-Chetouani is as nervous as the youths he looks after in the shabby housing blocks of northern Asnières. In more than 20 years of social work, the community leader says the restive northern suburbs of Paris have seldom felt quite so tense.

According to Ech-Chetouani, strict confinement measures to halt the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, coupled with tough policing to enforce those rules, have mixed up an “explosive cocktail” in areas already blighted by poverty, unemployment and now a worsening health crisis. “The spark has been lit,” he says, referring to the unrest that has swept through several northern banlieues of Paris in recent nights. The trouble in nearby Villeneuve-La-Garenne first flared late on Saturday after a motorcyclist collided with the open door of an unmarked police car during a pursuit. Witnesses said the officers had deliberately opened the door into the motorcyclist's path, a claim denied by police.

The skirmishes lasted into the early hours of Sunday before calm was restored, but unrest broke out again the following two nights, spreading to other suburbs north of Paris, including Asnières. Police said fireworks were aimed at them and several cars were torched while officers fired tear gas to disperse the troublemakers.

Relations between police and residents have long been a fraught issue in France's ethnically diverse suburbs, where men of African and North African origin complain about being routinely stopped and searched simply because of the color of their skin. A study by France's National Centre for Scientific Research has shown that blacks are 11.5 times more likely to be checked by police than whites, and those of Arab origin are seven times more likely.

In what has become a depressing cycle of violence and resentment, such routine checks can lead to violent altercations and eventually riots, a daunting prospect the French government is desperate to avoid as it grapples with a health emergency.

When President Emmanuel Macron imposed a nationwide lockdown starting March 17, police officers privately expressed concerns that tough restrictions on public life could amplify tensions and spark unrest.

In late March, the satirical weekly Le Canard Enchaîné, a leading source of investigative journalism, reported that the Interior Ministry had quietly asked police chiefs to adopt a light touch as they seek to enforce the lockdown in restive suburbs so as not to inflame tensions.

However, activists on the ground say the police approach has been anything but light. On the first day of confinement, the Seine-Saint-Denis department northeast of Paris – home to France's poorest districts – accounted for 10 percent of all fines handed out for breaching the lockdown despite comprising just over 2 percent of the country's population.

Since then, videos of heavy-handed arrests have circulated widely on French social media, along with calls for revenge. “You're much less likely to see police fining and harassing parents who play with their children in the Bois de Boulogne,” says Echi-Chetouani, referring to the park that borders the 16th arrondissement (district) of Paris in the French capital's affluent west.

The social worker says the situation has considerably worsened since the start of the lockdown, which he argues has only heightened a sense of power and impunity among the police.

“When there are people out in the streets, police abuses are less likely to go unnoticed,” he explains. “But with residents locked up at home, the police have become more violent and arbitrary.”

Venezuela Socialists, Opposition Leaders Begin Secret Talks

CARACAS (Reuters) - Allies of both Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his bitter foe, opposition leader Juan Guaido, have secretly begun exploratory talks as concerns grow about the possible impact of the spread of the coronavirus, according to sources on both sides.

The discussions emerged from concerns about the respiratory illness COVID-19, hyperinflation and growing fuel shortages, as well as worries among some members of the ruling Socialist Party about how to ensure their political survival under a possible change of government as Washington tightens sanctions, the sources said.

The talks, which have no clear agenda, show that allies of both Maduro and Guaido remain unconvinced they can defeat the other amid a global pandemic and a broad U.S. sanctions program meant to push Maduro from office.

“There are two extremes: Maduro and those who believe that the virus will end Guaido's leadership, and those on the other side (who) hope this crisis will bring down Maduro,” said an opposition legislator in favor of the rapprochement.

“I think we have to find solutions.”

Reuters was unable to determine when the talks began, where or how they are taking place, and how Maduro and Guaido view them. Seven sources, who represent both sides of Venezuela's deep political divide, confirmed the talks.

Maduro and Guaido are competing with one another to help combat the effects of the pandemic, with each side convinced the outbreak will undermine the other politically, said the sources, who asked not to be identified.

Activists and rights groups around the world have urged the two factions to seek a truce in order to coordinate the delivery of aid and boost gasoline imports.

The U.S. State Department in March offered to begin lifting parts of the sanctions if members of the Socialist Party form an interim government without Maduro, a plan backed by Guaido but quickly shot down by the government.

Venezuela's information ministry and Guaido's press team did not reply to a request for comment about the current talks.



U.S. Greencard Suspension to Last 60 Days

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump said Tuesday he was suspending immigration for green card seekers for 60 days, arguing the controversial move would help Americans find work again after coronavirus caused a surge in unemployment.

Trump told reporters at the White House the suspension would come into force through an executive order that he would likely sign on Wednesday as he offered the first details about a vague announcement he made Monday night on Twitter.

Addressing an issue key to his conservative base as the country is ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic, with more than 43,000 people dead in the U.S., Trump said his move would help Americans who have lost their jobs during the ongoing shutdown.

“By pausing immigration, it will help put unemployed Americans first in line for jobs as America reopens,” Trump said at his daily pandemic briefing.

“This pause will be in effect for 60 days,” he told reporters, adding that he would decide on any extension or changes “based on economic conditions at the time.”

The Republican president said the order would “only apply to individuals seeking a permanent residency -- in other words, those receiving green cards.”

“It will not apply to those entering on a temporary basis,” he added.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) granted lawful permanent residence to around 577,000 individuals in 2019. Trump said there would be exemptions that his administration would detail before the order is signed.

“We'll sign it most likely tomorrow. Being drawn now and tonight, and it's something we have to have in this country,” he added.

According to U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to The Wall Street Journal before Trump spoke, the eventual executive order could include exceptions for farm and health care workers.

The U.S. government issued 462,000 visas in fiscal 2019, according to official data -- a major drop from the 617,000 visas granted in 2016 under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama.

Seoul Plays Down Report on North Korean Leader's Health

SEOUL (dispatches) - South Korea played down a report Tuesday that the North's leader Kim Jong Un was being treated after surgery, as speculation mounted over his absence from a key anniversary.

Pyeongyang marked the birthday of its late founder, Kim's grandfather Kim Il Sung, on April 15 -- by far the most important date in its annual political calendar -- but Kim was not seen in attendance.

Daily NK, an online media outlet run mostly by North Korean defectors, said Kim had undergone a cardiovascular procedure earlier this month and was recovering at a villa in North Phyongan province.

“Excessive smoking, obesity and fatigue were the direct causes of Kim's urgent cardiovascular treatment,” it cited an unidentified source inside the country as saying.

No confirmation of the report was immediately available, but it triggered widespread speculation.

CNN, citing an anonymous U.S. official, said Washington was “monitoring intelligence” that Kim was in “grave danger” after undergoing surgery.

In a statement, a spokesman for the South's presidential Blue House said: “We have nothing to confirm and no special movement has been detected inside North Korea as of now.”

The South's Yonhap news agency cited an unnamed government official saying that reports Kim was seriously ill were “not true”.

Robert O'Brien, President Donald Trump's national security advisor, said US intelligence had a “close eye” on North Korea but noted that it was a “very closed society”.

“They're parsimonious with the information that they provide about many things, including the health of Kim Jong Un,” O'Brien told Fox News. “So we're monitoring those developments closely.”

There were no explicit denials that Kim, who is in his mid-30s, had had some kind of procedure.

Previous absences from the public eye on Kim's part have prompted speculation about his health.

In 2014 he dropped out of sight for nearly six weeks before reappearing with a cane. Days later, the South's spy agency said he had undergone surgery to remove a cyst from his ankle.

“No one knows what's going on inside North Korea,” said Martyn Williams, who is affiliated with the 38 North research website.

“Kim Jong Il had been dead several days before it was announced and it took everyone by surprise,” he tweeted.



Cameroon Admits Army Role in February Killing of 13 Civilians



YAOUNDE (AFP) - Cameroon's presidency admitted on Tuesday that three soldiers acting with militants killed 13 civilians including 10 children in an anglophone region in the west of the country in February.

The central African country's government had previously denied any role in the massacre in the region, where English-speaking separatists have been fighting the armed forces for the past two years.

According to the United Nations, the massacre on the night of February 13 left 23 civilians dead including 15 children in the village of Ntumbo.

The UN said nine of the children were aged under five and that two of the victims were pregnant women. A Human Rights Watch tally published on February 28 said 21 civilians were killed, including 13 minors and a pregnant woman.

Citing witness accounts, HRW blamed the killings on between 10 and 15 troops from an elite rapid intervention battalion which was backed by “at least 30 armed Fulani” militiamen.

In a statement read over state radio on Tuesday, the president's office said three soldiers and a vigilante group stormed a separatist base, killing five, before “discovering that three women and 10 children were killed” in the firefight.

“Overcome with panic, the three soldiers helped by some members of the self-defence group tried to hide the incident by setting fires,” the statement said. The army had initially claimed that the deaths were an accident after fuel supplies exploded into flames during a gun battle with separatists.

After NGOs alleged that the army and a Fulani militia ally were responsible, President Paul Biya responded to international pressure by demanding an investigation into the killings.

The first results from that investigation came on Tuesday, with Biya ordering the arrest of the sergeant who led the “reconnaissance mission” raid.

The report into the incident said the sergeant did not have his charges under control and gave a “biased account to his superiors” on which the government based its initial statement about the incident.

English speakers account for nearly a fifth of Cameroon's population of 24 million, who are majority French-speaking.



Zaferanieh Apt (\$2500)
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J, balcony
fireplace
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Pasdaran Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

(\$1800)
Jordan Apt
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, S, J, pkg
marble fl, & F.F

Kamranieh
240sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, S, J
large balcony
Nicely Furn
(\$2300)

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IMF, Regional Financing Arrangements Agree to Co-Finance Pandemic Responses

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The heads of the International Monetary Fund, Arab Monetary Fund, European Stability Mechanism and other regional finance arrangements on Tuesday agreed to work together to mitigate the economic and financial impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a joint statement issued after a teleconference,

the officials said they agree to cooperate to facilitate co-financing operations to address the needs of their members.

"We remain strongly committed to working together closely, in accordance with our individual mandates and policies, to exchange information on the needs of our members, and to coordinate assistance across different regions of the world," they said in the statement.



Turkish Economy to Shrink for First Time in a Decade This Year

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – Turkey's economy is expected to contract this year for the first time in over a decade as the coronavirus pandemic slashes output through mid-year, and it's unlikely to grow again until 2021, a Reuters poll showed on Tuesday.

The median forecast of some 40 economists was for a contraction of 1.4 percent in 2020, with drops in the second and third quarters of 8.6 percent and 5.3 percent respectively.

Before the coronavirus outbreak, the government expected the economy to expand 5 percent this year after rebounding from a recession last year. The government has not updated its gross domestic product forecast since the country recorded its first case of COVID-19 in mid-March. The virus has since spread, putting Turkey seventh here globally in confirmed coronavirus cases.

The economy is expected to grow again next year by 3.7 percent, according to the poll's median. For the first quarter of this year, the official report due on May 29 is forecast to show growth of 4.4 percent.

Ankara has shut schools and some businesses, closed borders and adopted weekend lockdowns. But it has stopped short of imposing a full stay-at-home order in an effort to support some economic activity.

Economists said robust lending in the first quarter positioned Turkey relatively well as it headed into the global downturn.

"We think that all sectors of the economy will be affected by COVID and we assume that most of the negative impact would concentrate on Q2-Q3 2020," UBS economists said.

"Both investments and exports should outright contract in 2020 given the global slowdown from the pandemic. However, credit growth – while clearly expected to fall notably from current levels – might remain flat by end-2020."

Turkey's economy last contracted on an annual basis in 2009, by 4.7 percent. From 2010 to 2018, its average growth rate was more than 5 percent thanks to a construction boom driven by cheap capital following the global financial crisis.

A currency crisis in 2018 was set off by concerns over central bank independence and tension between Ankara and Washington. That led to three straight quarters of economic contraction and a modest annual growth rate of 0.9 percent last year.

Since July, the central bank has cut rates to 9.75 percent from 24 percent to boost growth and reflect declining inflation.

In the poll, economists predicted the central bank would continue cutting to reach 8.00 percent by the end of June as it ramps up its response to the outbreak, according to the median response.

Annual inflation, which has hovered around 12 percent the last few months, is expected to decline to 8.3 percent by the end of the year before rising to 8.9 percent by the end of 2021, the poll showed based on the median.

"We forecast inflation to quickly decelerate due to lower oil prices ... with CPI being single digit already from May 2020 onwards," UBS wrote.

UBS predicts 8.3 percent annual inflation in Turkey by the end of the year and further monetary policy easing before the central bank raises rates again in the second half of 2021.

The current account balance, which recorded a rare surplus last year as the economy slowed, has since returned to a deficit. The deficit is expected to stand at 1.2 percent of GDP this year and 2.6 percent next year, according to the poll.

Pandemic to Hit 170 Countries' GDP in 2020

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Some 170 countries will face narrowing in their GDP this year due to the novel coronavirus' impact on the economy, the directing manager of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said late Monday.

"Only months ago we were projecting 160 economies to register positive per capita income growth," Kristalina Georgieva stressed.

The pandemic is a "crisis like no other," she stressed, noting that the global crisis, which caused successive effects on health and economy, is more complex and uncertain.

"The outlook is dire. We expect global economic activity to decline on a scale we have not seen since the Great Depression," Georgieva highlighted.

Referring to countries' actions to tackle the virus, the IMF chief said: "Fiscal measures so far have amounted to about \$8 trillion and central banks have undertaken massive liquidity injections."

She added that the IMF maximized its lending capacity to provide financial resources rapidly for its members.

After originating in Wuhan, China last December, COVID-19 has spread to at least 185 countries and regions worldwide, with Europe and the U.S. the worst-hit regions.

There are more than 2.47 million cases worldwide and nearly 170,400 deaths. Over 652,000 have recovered from the virus, according to data compiled by U.S.-based Johns Hopkins University.



Russian Rouble Weakens Further After Plunge in Global Oil Prices

MOSCOW (Reuters) - The rouble weakened further on Tuesday in reaction to an historic plunge in oil prices that will aggravate an economic slump in Russia triggered by the coronavirus outbreak.

U.S. oil prices sank below \$0 for the first time ever on Monday, after Moscow markets

closed, as growing stockpiles of crude mean the United States is running out of storage space. U.S. prices, however, limped back into positive territory early on Tuesday.

The rouble was 0.9% weaker against the dollar at 76.25 after falling by 2.1% on Monday but was away from a four-year low of 81.97 hit a month ago.

Versus the euro, the rouble shed 0.8% to trade at 82.61, near two-week lows, after falling nearly 2% on Monday as global oil prices crashed.

Brent crude oil, a global benchmark for Russia's main export, was down 9.8% at \$23.08 a barrel.

The coronavirus crisis and lockdowns introduced to contain the virus have put the Russian economy on the brink of recession and is expected to boost unemployment. Oil is the country's biggest export.

The central bank has supported the rouble by recently increasing daily selling of foreign currency from state reserves, addressing a slide in oil prices to which its FX interventions are pegged.

The central bank is expected to take an extra step to cushion the economic contraction by cutting interest rates as soon as this Friday.

Russian stock indexes opened lower. The dollar-denominated RTS index was down 4.3% at 1,022.1 points. The rouble-based MOEX Russian index slid 2% to 2,475.2 points.

Shares in Russia's oil giant Rosneft underperformed the broader market by losing 3.1% on the day ahead of its board decision on dividends. They dropped 1.9% on Monday as oil prices fell.

U.S. View of China Tumbles To All-Time Low

WASHINGTON (AFP) - As thousands of Americans die from the new coronavirus, both President Donald Trump and his challenger Joe Biden are attacking China. One reason behind their strategy -- China has never been more disliked by the U.S. public.

A study released Tuesday by the Pew Research Center found that 66 percent of Americans held an unfavorable view of China, the most negative finding on record and the culmination of a steady worsening since Trump took office in 2017. "Essentially, within the last couple of years, we've seen a dramatic shift towards the negative," said Laura Miller, one of the authors of the study.

Trump, whose own handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has faced wide criticism, and hawkish members of his Republican Party have for weeks cast China as the culprit of the illness first detected in Wuhan that has killed more than 42,000 people in the United States.

In a stark sign of how negative the November election may be, the Trump campaign has already put out a commercial that aims to link presumptive Democratic nominee Biden to China, which silenced early news of COVID-19. Set to footage of the former vice president's diplomacy with Chinese leaders, the online ad says Biden "protected China's feelings" and suggests without evidence that he was corrupted by his troubled son Hunter's business interests.

Biden hit back with an ad of his own that quotes Trump's own initial praise of China's pandemic efforts and says he left the United States "unprepared and unprotected."

China was already under fire on numerous fronts. US businesses, once cheerleaders for a strong relationship, have grown disgruntled over alleged intellectual property theft and other trade issues.

Most Democrats voiced rare agreement with Trump as he slapped tariffs on billion of dollars of Chinese products. And ahead of congressional elections in 2018, Republicans -- mindful of allegations of Russian help to Trump -- went on an unusually forceful offensive that accused China of interference by taking out newspaper advertisements.

The Pew survey found negative sentiment toward China spanning the US spectrum -- with even a majority of young Americans for the first time seeing the Asian power unfavorably.

But the issues have shifted. U.S. job losses to China and the US deficit, seen in 2012 as major concerns, have slipped in significance.

Instead, majorities of Americans now say that China's impact on the environment, its human rights record and cyberattacks are "very serious" problems for the United States.

"People see China as more of a threat, and that can take on a number of different dimensions," said Miller, a senior researcher at Pew. Pew interviewed 1,000 people by telephone from March 3-29 and did not detect movement during that timeframe as the coronavirus pandemic worsened. But Miller said that negativity toward China would probably keep rising if the public narrative does not change.

"One thing that we often do during elections in the United States is we use international whipping boys. And so if China becomes that, we might expect to see negative views tick up," she said.

Lockheed Martin Profit Beats



LONDON (Reuters) - Lockheed Martin reported better-than-expected quarterly profit on Tuesday, helped by higher sales in its aeronautics business that makes the F-35 fighter jets, but lowered its 2020 sales outlook due to coronavirus-led supply chain delays.

The company said it now expects full-year sales in a range of \$62.25 billion to \$64.00 billion, down from \$62.75 billion to \$64.25 billion, forecast previously. Lockheed reaffirmed its 2020 earnings per share forecast of \$23.80 - the mid point of the range.

Lockheed's earnings announcement disclosed that while earnings for the first quarter had not been impacted, "the corporation is beginning to experience some issues in each of its business areas related to COVID-19" such as location access and supplier delivery delays.

The Pentagon's chief weapons buyer said on Monday that a three-month slowdown was now expected on major defense programs as a result of supplier operating challenges during the coronavirus pandemic.

Lockheed said production and supply chain activities had slowed in its aeronautics business due to the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing it to trim its sales outlook. Lockheed's Aeronautics division, which makes the F-35 fighter jet, saw quarterly sales up 14% in the quarter to \$6.4 billion.

However, the U.S. defense sector is expected to see much less COVID-19 disruption due to generally stable cash flows compared with industrial markets, according to analysts. Early on in the pandemic the defense industry was deemed essential, giving those workers an avenue to continue production.

"While defense companies like Lockheed Martin are not immune to coronavirus, the projected impact on the 2020 results looks very minor compared to what is likely to be seen elsewhere in the industrial sector," analyst Robert Stallard of Vertical Research wrote in a note on Tuesday.

EU Reviewing Steel Imports in View of Possible Glut

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The coronavirus crisis could lead to massive stockpiling of steel that could then flood the European Union when demand returns, the EU trade chief said on Tuesday, adding this was something the bloc would seek to guard against.

The EU put in place safeguards in 2018 to control incoming steel to protect European manufacturers after Washington's imposition of 25% steel tariffs closed the U.S. market to many exporters.

Quotas for 26 grades of steel, including stainless, were set at the average of imports in 2015-2017 plus 5%, with a 3% hike last year. Imports beyond the quotas are subject to a 25% duty.

EU Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan said on Tuesday that the adjustment for this year would take place by July 1 as planned. Initially, the Commission had envisaged a further 5% increase in the quotas, albeit subject to a review.

Lots of lawmakers and EU countries had expressed concerns about possible stockpiling of steel, particularly by China, and what would happen to these stocks when the restrictions were eased, Hogan said. "We are looking at the review of the steel safeguards in this context," he told members of the European Parliament in a video session.



Third country exporters could seriously disrupt the EU market, he said, depending on their behaviour when demand in the 27-nation bloc revived.

"Certain third country exporters may well decide to sell their product at below cost or at all cost or at any cost, with a view to gaining larger stakes in a smaller EU market," he said.

EU steel production is already down by about 50% and new orders have fallen by 70-75%, with further production cuts planned as demand continues to fall given a near complete shutdown of the auto sector and a significant decline in construction, EU industry body Eurofer said.

Eurofer said it was already seeing extremely low prices on offer from third country exporters for certain steel grades.

TEDPIX Climbs 14,267 Points to Reach 740,404

TEHRAN (MNA) – TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) 14,267 points to hit 740,404 on Wednesday (at 11:52 a.m. local time).

As reported, on the same day, more than 84.2 tons of hydrocarbon products, at the value of above two trillion trials (above \$13.33 million), were traded at Iran

Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

TSE registered its highest-ever jump on Saturday, the index gained 23,219 points in a single day to stand at 668,981, as over 5.775 billion securities worth 61.55 trillion rials (about \$1.465 billion) were traded through 830,000 deals.



World Must Act Now to Avert Food Crisis Over Virus

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Countries should act now to stop the COVID-19 pandemic transforming into a food crisis, the head of the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) said.

“The fallout from COVID-19 may push rural families even deeper into poverty, hunger and desperation, which is a real threat to global prosperity and stability,” Gilbert Houngbo noted.

He asserted that immediate action can support rural people to provide rapid recovery and prevent a bigger humanitarian crisis.

The IFAD launched a \$40 million package to support farmers and rural communities, the fund said in a press release.

It expects to raise this fund by \$200 million with contributions from member states, foundations and the private sector.

“Many small-scale farmers are unable to access markets to sell products or to buy inputs, such as seeds or fertilizer,” it recalled, adding: “As entire production chains are disrupted and unemployment rises, the most vulnerable include daily laborers, small businesses and informal workers, who are very often women and young people.”

It also reminded that 80% of the poorest people globally live in rural areas, and, even before the pandemic, over 820 million people were going hungry every day.

“A recent United Nations University study warned that in a worst-case scenario, the economic impact of the pandemic could push a further half-billion people into poverty,” it stressed.

Meanwhile, experts say Turkey is a self-sufficient country in terms of food, especially agricultural production.

Many major European countries, such as Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain, employ



foreign people for agricultural production, but closing borders due to the pandemic will further hit these countries' production.

After originating in Wuhan, China last December, COVID-19 has spread to at least 185 countries and regions worldwide, with Europe and the U.S. the worst-hit regions.

There are over 2.48 million cases worldwide and more than 170,400 deaths. Almost 653,000 have recovered from the virus, according to data compiled by U.S.-based Johns Hopkins University.

Half of World's Locked-Down Pupils Lack Computer



PARIS (AFP) - Half of the world's school and university students affected by class closures because of the coronavirus outbreak -- from pre-primary to university level -- do not have access to a computer for home-schooling, the UN's educational agency said Tuesday.

Highlighting “startling digital divides” between the rich and poor, a UNESCO statement added that 43 percent of young people have no access to internet at home.

This means roughly 826 million students have no home computer and some 706 million no internet at a time when “distance learning” is the only option available for most, with school closures in 191 countries of the world, UNESCO said.

“Disparities are particularly acute in low-income countries: in sub-Saharan Africa, 89 percent of learners do not have access to household computers and 82 percent lack internet access,” the agency said.

The figures are based on data from UNESCO's Institute for Statistics and another UN agency, the International Telecommunication Union.

About 56 million students -- almost half of them in sub-Saharan Africa -- live in places with no mobile networks for accessing internet on a phone, the statement said.

“We now know that continued teaching and learning cannot be limited to online means,” UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay said in a statement.

“We must also support other alternatives including the use of community radio and television broadcasts, and creativity in all ways of learning.”

Globally, at least 1.5 million students and 63 million primary and secondary teachers are affected by the unprecedented shuttering of schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency said.

“Even for teachers in countries with reliable information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and household connectivity, the rapid transition to online learning has been challenging,” it added.

“For teachers in regions where ICT and other distance methodologies are less available, the transition has been even more difficult or impossible.”

Saudi Arabia Wins Oil Price War - at a Huge Cost

RIYADH (AFP) - Saudi Arabia may have won a brief no-holds-barred oil price war with Russia, but observers say it hastened a coronavirus-led energy slump despite a subsequent historic deal to slash production.

U.S. crude oil futures crashed into negative territory for the first time in history on Monday amid a supply glut that was further compounded by the price war that began in March.

OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia ramped up oil output to record levels in March and April and offered substantial discounts in retaliation for Russia's refusal to tighten its supply in a wider effort to prop up prices.

That move sent energy markets into a tailspin, with prices plunging to multi-year lows as Saudi Arabia flexed its financial muscle to assert that -- unlike its rivals -- it had the capacity to withstand low prices for years.

The market turmoil eventually led Russia and other producers back to the drawing board, resulting in a historic deal to cut production by nearly 10 million barrels a day in May and June.

But crude prices still continued to sink.

“It cost the global energy market almost two months of spectacularly low oil prices but, with the largest deal to cut production in history, Saudi Arabia has won the oil price war,” said Cinzia Bianco, a research fellow at the European Council for International Relations.

Tehran Ready to Share...

FROM PAGE 1

“We are interested in the immediate implementation of the agreements between the two countries, including the Iranian gas exports to Oman and the Omani investment in Chabahar port, which would serve the interests of the two governments and nations,” President Rouhani noted.

He further commended Oman for its cooperation and measures regarding the peace initiative proposed by Iran, known as the Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE), stating, “We are fully prepared to act in line with that initiative or any other initiative that would leave the crisis management of the region in the hands of the regional countries.”

Throughout history, the Strait of Hormuz has been left in peace, stability and calm in light of the good relations between Iran and Oman, President Rouhani noted, adding, “We have always tried in recent years to prevent the outbreak of war and bloodshed in the region, and we must proceed with the efforts to stop the war in Yemen which has brought about devastation and famine.” Regional stability will be undoubtedly ensured in light of friendly ties among the regional countries, the president emphasized, saying Iran keeps calling for cordial relations among the neighbors.

Expressing hope for closer interaction between Iran and Oman and their cooperation on the bilateral and regional issues during Sultan Haitham's tenure, President Rouhani congratulated the Omani people and government on the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

For his part, the sultan of Oman hailed the close and amicable ties with Iran, noting, “Our relations are historic, and I give an assurance that such ties will continue like under late Sultan Qaboos' rule.”

The Omani leader also stressed the need for the enhancement of ties between Muscat and Tehran in all arenas, noting that implementation of the previous agreements would be to the benefit of both nations. Sultan Haitham finally praised Iran's stance and policies on establishing peace and stability in the region and ensuring security of the Strait of Hormuz, adding, “We must all try to keep the region away from any war and worrying incident.”

China Slams Australia...

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It is widely believed that Trump, who is seeking re-election in November, is trying to blame Beijing and deflect from the shortcomings of his own response to the pandemic. In a matter of weeks, the US has become the country the worst hit by the pandemic in the world, in large part due to the Trump administration's inadequate response.

Meanwhile, the U.S. state of Missouri on Tuesday filed the first court lawsuit against China over the pandemic, claiming that Beijing's late release of the news of the outbreak had led to the devastation of Missouri's economy.

This is while China alerted the World Health Organization (WHO) of the then-mysterious virus in December, shortly after it emerged in Wuhan.

In a related development, China's ambassador to the U.S. said the accusations that China was to blame for the pandemic were “groundless” and distracted the public from scientific information about the virus.

Riyadh...

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Howeiti regularly posted videos online, condemning the \$500 billion Neom project — a centerpiece of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's ambitious Vision 2030 economic plan — and the forced eviction of residents from the construction zone.

Saudi regime forces reportedly kill a tribal activist after he resisted demolition of his house for the sake of controversial NEOM megacity project. In one of his videos, the victim denounced as “state terrorism” the displacement of locals from the area, where the Howeitat tribe has lived for hundreds of years.

“People are being wiped out from their homes and people do not agree with what is happening at all. But the way in which the state has dealt with things can only be described as terrorism... state terrorism,” he said.

“I am against the forced removal of people. I don't want to leave; I want to stay in my home. I do not want compensation, I don't want anything. I only want my home,” the activist said.

In another video, Howeiti documented his final moments before he was fatally shot, showing the area, from which his neighbors had been forcibly removed.

He recorded footage from his roof showing dozens of Saudi forces, saying that “whoever refuses expulsion or signing, this is what they do to him”. One of the regime forces is heard replying to Howeiti, “No one is making you sign.”

Saudi political activist Omar bin Abdulaziz described Howeiti as the “Martyr of Neom.”

The European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights (ESOHR) blasted Saudi Arabia for withholding bodies of activists, saying the practice violates international law and runs counter to Islamic teachings.

The news comes days before the anniversary of the regime's execution of 37 political activists, most of whom were with the kingdom's Shia Muslim community. The Riyadh regime reportedly refused to turn over at least 33 of the bodies, ignoring repeated pleas from the families and instead burying the corpses itself.

Trump's Support...

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“There was a day when they would consider themselves to be in charge of everything in the world. Now, they are among the world's desperate countries,” he added.

“We should learn a salutary lesson from them,” the Iranian president noted, advising strongly in favor of unity and integrity among members of the Iranian nation amid the viral outbreak and its associated problems.

He also said Iran is able to export some health items needed to fight the coronavirus.

Rouhani said Iran is now producing a whole range of equipment, including coronavirus diagnosis kits, antibodies, face masks and other supplies.

He said the products are enough to meet domestic needs, and added some of them are surplus to requirements and can be exported to other countries.

The president thanked efforts by different sectors for their contribution to the national campaign against the coronavirus outbreak.

He then made it clear that the pandemic is not over yet, urging people to keep abiding by health protocols.

“If we think we have finished the job in the fight against the coronavirus and now we are taking the final steps, we will definitely be harmed,” he said.

President Rouhani further noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has turned into a test for all countries to gauge their efficiency and preparedness.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he took a swipe at “a small group” of people who seek to provoke anxiety among people over the coronavirus outbreak by spreading untrue words on social media and elsewhere.

He also dismissed some profiteers who have tried to cash in on the pandemic for their own gain.

“These people once took advantage of sanctions [for their own benefit] and now are taking advantage of the coronavirus,” he said.

The president urged people to keep abiding by social distancing measures and health protocols amid the COVID-19 outbreak. He also underlined that the country's medical personnel have become more experienced in fighting the disease.

He said the success in the fight against the coronavirus is not only because of the government's efforts; rather, is has been due to people's attempts.

He referred to the gradual reopening of some businesses, and added precautionary measures need to remain in place until “we get through this.”

COVID-19 Kills...

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A meeting on Combating COVID-19 held at Interior Ministry chaired by Iran's Deputy Interior Minister for Security Affairs Hossein Zolfagari. Also at this meeting Brigadier General Hassan Hassanzadeh commander of Seyed-al-Shohada Corps, head of the Health Ministry's Center for Management of Contagious Diseases Mohammad Mehdi Gouya and Alireza Raeisi, deputy of Health Ministry were in attendance.

Zolfagari stated, “Iran's implementation of Social Distancing has shot down schools, universities, and Friday prayers decreasing the commuting and communications. People's cooperation succeeded in cutting down the infection and the numbers of infected.”

He added two topics that are important to consider after the fall of COVID-19 peak; one continuous monitoring of people's health and second, people's business and income which have been taken into account form two weeks ago.

The official highlighted that the reopening of parks and resorts under hygienic protocols and priority for providing hygienic and disinfectant for the public transportation system. “There is also an effort to allocate a place in the entrance of subways and buses to distribute masks for those who don't have,” the official added.

Today at the meeting chaired by Zolfagari also it has been suggested to increase work hours in order to decrease the commuting and crowds during rush hour for the Fast-Breaking time.

“Coronavirus is a serious matter still, the world is grappling with it, and Iran is one of the forerunners of combating the virus. What is validated and important for us is the reports given by the Health Ministry, the rest which might make people's preoccupied and make them anxious are not valuable,” he concluded.

Kasparov to Take Part In Online Nations Cup

LONDON (Reuters) - Former world champion Garry Kasparov will be among the competitors in an online Nations Cup, a new chess competition featuring six teams of four players, the World Chess Federation (FIDE) announced on Tuesday.

Some big chess names from recent decades will take part as Russia, United States, Europe, China, India and a Rest of the World team compete amid the coronavirus crisis with a prize fund of \$180,000, FIDE said.

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Ryder Cup Without Fans Under Consideration

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - PGA chief executive Seth Waugh has said his organisation is studying the feasibility of staging this year's Ryder Cup without fans in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

Waugh told New York's WFAN radio that while a Ryder Cup without spectators was "hard to imagine," PGA officials were looking to see if the event could be held with "virtual fans."

This year's Ryder Cup -- the hotly contested biennial team competition that pits the United States against Europe -- is due to be held at Whistling Straits, Wisconsin from September 25-27.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

THURSDAY APRIL 23, 2020

UEFA Urges Leagues to Complete Suspended Football Seasons

PARIS (Dispatches) - UEFA remains committed to completing the suspended football season in Europe despite the coronavirus pandemic after making "a strong recommendation" on Tuesday that leagues across the continent be played to a conclusion.

"There was a strong recommendation given to finish domestic top division and cup competitions," European football's governing body said in a statement after holding a videoconference with its 55 member associations.

However, it added that "some special cases will be heard once guidelines concerning participation to European competitions -- in case of a cancelled league -- have been developed."

That could be of particular interest to Belgium and Scotland, whose top flights appear to have been awaiting a green light from UEFA to call an end to their seasons now.

UEFA said any decisions would be announced after its Executive Committee meets on Thursday. Before that it is due to meet with the powerful European Club Association (ECA) and the European Leagues grouping, which represents nearly a thousand clubs in 29 countries, on Wednesday.

League seasons were halted in mid-March as the coronavirus spread across Europe. Some 106,737 deaths due to Covid-19 had been recorded in Europe by Tuesday. Italy, Spain and France have all officially recorded over 20,000 deaths while there have been more than 17,000 in the United Kingdom.

However, Germany has coped better than most of its neighbours and the German Bundesliga is set to become the first leading league to attempt to restart its season, with clubs expected to agree to a May 9 resumption when they meet on Thursday.

In Italy, all 20 Serie A clubs voted unanimously on Tuesday to complete the season, albeit they will only do so "if the government authorises it and in full compliance with the rules for the protection of health and safety".

Initially following the suspension, the end of June had been set out as the target date for finishing the season, but UEFA has since been working on the possibility of playing in July and August.

It is understood that the scenario drawn up by a UEFA working group is based around completing the Champions League in August, with the final in Istanbul possibly on August 29.

The Champions League and Europa League are currently on hold "until further notice", with both stuck in the last-16 stage.

German Football Must Repay Trust

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The boss of the Bundesliga says the German league must repay the trust shown by Angela Merkel's government if football returns, as expected on May 9, despite the coronavirus pandemic.

"It is our task to repay this trust," said Christian Seifert, CEO of the German Football League (DFL).

"It is the task of the clubs, but also of the players.

"This has a lot to do with hygiene measures, it has a lot to do with behaviour in private life," Seifert said, in a video message. "It's a matter of being particularly disciplined"

With the German government slowly easing restrictions, there is hope the top two tiers of the Bundesliga can return to action.

On Thursday, Seifert will host a video conference with the top clubs to discuss how to restart league football, which was halted on March 13.

Many details are set to be finalised, including the key issue of regular testing of players.

Matches would be played in near-empty stadiums -- known as 'ghost games' in German -- with fans locked out.

Hopes that the season can resume in a fortnight and be completed by June 30 received a huge boost Monday from Germany's health minister Jens Spahn.

"Ghost games are certainly possible again," Spahn told the Bild daily.

"The decisive factor is that the risk of infection is minimised.

"For millions of football fans, this would then be a piece of normality again from May 9, even if it is in an empty stadium."

Markus Soeder, the president of the state of Bavaria, and Armin Laschet, head of North Rhine-Westphalia -- two key German football strongholds -- have also voiced support.

However, there are still dozens of details to iron out. "Games with fans are completely unthinkable. Even ghost games are a tightrope walk," insisted Soeder.

Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, chairman of defending champions Bayern Munich, said his club will take measures to stop fans congregating outside their Allianz Arena stadium during games.



UEFA has already postponed Euro 2020 by a year. They are also likely to put the next women's European Championship back by a year to 2022.

Despite UEFA's stance, football is at the mercy of the virus and of national governments who have adopted strict lockdown measures to try to halt its spread.

The Belgian Pro League has previously stated its intention to declare the season finished, but was warned earlier this month by UEFA that its clubs risked being excluded from the next Champions League if it did so unilaterally.

The decision was unanimously approved by the Pro League board at the start of the month and could be rubber-stamped at a meeting next Monday.

Meanwhile, Scotland has already declared the season over in the leagues below the top flight and could do the same for the Premiership if UEFA does not object, meaning Celtic would be champions.

Kyrgios No Fan Of Slams Without Crowd



MUMBAI (Reuters) - As Grand Slam governing bodies ponder over the perfect blueprint of future events amid the novel coronavirus pandemic, Australian world number 40 Nick Kyrgios has said he does not want to play in a major in the absence of crowd.

The tennis season was suspended in March due to the pandemic and the shutdown will continue at least until mid-July with countries closing borders and going into lockdown to contain the spread of the virus.

The French Open, the first Grand Slam to be hit by the spread of the coronavirus, moved the claycourt event to Sept. 20-Oct. 4 from its traditional May start while the Wimbledon championships, set to begin in late June, were cancelled.

The organisers of the U.S. Open said last week that playing the hardcourt Grand Slam without fans is on the table but highly unlikely. The Australian Open organisers have said they were also exploring all options, including the possibility of running an event just for broadcast.

"100% no," the mercurial Kyrgios, who always draws huge numbers on court, told fellow Australian Thanasi Kokkinakis on an Instagram chat when asked if he would play a Grand Slam without fans in the stands.

China FA Proposes Minimum 30% Pay Cut



BEIJING (Dispatches) - The Chinese Football Association has proposed clubs slash wages of players and coaches by at least 30 percent to cut costs because of the coronavirus, state media said Tuesday.

The People's Daily said that the CFA is now awaiting feedback from teams in the top-tier Chinese Super League (CSL) and the two divisions below.

The CSL season was supposed to begin on February 22 but was indefinitely postponed after coronavirus emerged in central China in December, before spreading worldwide.

"After the opinions are collected and revised, the Chinese Football Association will report to FIFA and other relevant departments," the state-run newspaper said. "It is understood that the target of the Chinese Football Association (wages cuts)... does not include youth players and ordinary employees with relatively low salaries," People's Daily added.

The CSL has enticed foreign coaches and players in recent years with vast pay packets.

Shanghai SIPG's Brazilian attacking midfielder Oscar is one of the best-paid players in the world on an estimated \$27 million a year.

Temporary wage reductions in football are a hot topic with clubs facing financial challenges because of the pandemic, which has seen most leagues indefinitely suspended. Arsenal became the first English Premier League club to agree a pay cut on Monday with manager Mikel Arteta and players accepting a 12.5 percent reduction in salary.

La Liga Clubs Pledge 200m Euros To Other Sports



MADRID (Reuters) - Clubs in Spain's top two divisions have agreed to give an additional 200 million euros (£176.4 million) over the next four years to boost Spanish sports and lower league football, the league's organizing body La Liga said in a statement on Tuesday.

Since signing a collective broadcasting rights deal in 2015, La Liga has donated 1% of its revenue to Spain's sports ministry. It has increased this to 2.5% as part of a new agreement, while it has doubled its contribution to the national soccer federation (RFEF) from 1% to 2%.

The agreement comes after an eight-hour meeting between La Liga's president Javier Tebas and RFEF chief Luis Rubiales, who have had a long-running dispute over how Spanish soccer should be run, and the sports minister Irene Lozano.

"This agreement looks to help sport not just in these moments of crisis provoked by COVID-19 but forever," said the statement. "This is a structural measure with no time limit which will strengthen the commitment of the professional clubs and La Liga with Spanish sport."

Many La Liga clubs have been damaged financially by the pause in football due to the COVID-19 pandemic and have enacted wage cuts, although other sports and non-professional clubs have also been hit during the national state of emergency.

The virus has so far infected more than 200,000 people in Spain, claiming 21,282 lives.

Crystal Palace Claim To Be World's Oldest Professional Club



LONDON (Dispatches) - Crystal Palace have made an audacious claim to be considered the oldest league club in existence still playing professional football after new research appeared to show they were founded in 1861.

For decades Notts County, currently playing in England's fifth-tier National League, have been regarded as the oldest professional club following their foundation in 1862.

But author Peter Manning, working on behalf of Premier League side Palace, has discovered a link between the south Londoners, founded as a professional club in 1905, and a cricket and football club formed a year before County were born. The research claims there is a direct connection between the two outfits through their ownership by the Crystal Palace Company. "Without the Crystal Palace and the Crystal Palace Company there would have been no Crystal Palace Football Club," said Manning.

"It was always one club and always part of the Crystal Palace Company's business. As the founding of the football club dates back to 1861, it can claim to be the oldest professional league club in the world." Palace chairman Steve Parish said: "As a lifelong supporter of Crystal Palace, it's amazing that we have a legitimate claim to be the oldest professional league club still in existence, that we were in the very first FA meetings, and that our history dates all the way back to the Victorian cricketers of 1861 at the Palace even involving the great W.G. Grace."